United Nations A/HRC/30/NGO/104

General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 September 2015

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirtieth session
Agenda item 7
Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

Written statement* submitted by the Amuta for NGO Responsibility, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[31 August 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.15-15203(E)

Please recycle

European complicity in the promotion of global antisemitism

In August 2015, the scheduled appearance of Jewish-American reggae star, Matisyahu, at the Rontontom Sunsplash in Valencia Spain was cancelled because the artist refused to "clearly declare himself regarding the [Gaza] war and in particular the right of the Palestinian people to have their own State." Matisyahu was the only artist at the festival singled out for such a political litmus test, and it is clear that he was targeted by the organizers due to his Jewish identity. In sharp contrast, a singer known for his homophobic lyrics was a welcomed performer at Rontontom. After a significant public outcry, the festival organizers reversed their position, claiming they had been subject to intimidation and threats by promoters of anti-Israel and antisemitic BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions).

BDS is a form of "new" antisemitism. British lawyer Anthony Julius observes that this new antisemitism "became hegemonic in the 1990s and 2000s.... It is to be distinguished from the 'old antisemitism' because it takes Israel and the Zionist project as its collective term for the Jews." Nevertheless, it is "continuous with the 'old antisemitism' in its principal stratagems and tropes, while novel in its specific focus upon the Jewish State—uniquely evil and without the right to exist."

To its credit, the Spanish government called the action against Matisyahu discriminatory and condemned the BDS activists. Yet, Spain continues to fund many NGOs that are integral players in BDS activism. Moreover, incidents similar to the one targeting Matisyahu occur repeatedly throughout Europe (Fringe Festival, British Globe to Globe Festival, Human Rights Human Wrongs festival in Norway, etc...). European grocery stores such as Luxemborg's Cactus and the UK's Co-op chain single out Israeli companies, while gladly stocking products from countries responsible for mass atrocities. These antisemitic actions are met with silence by European officials. And like Spain, despite their claims to reject BDS, the European Union and European governments provide hundreds of millions in funding to organizations and institutions that promote BDS and antisemitism.

For example, the governments of Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, via the Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Secretariat ("IHL Secretariat"), are major funders of BDS organizations and groups promoting antisemitism. Through this framework, which is based at the Institute of Law of Birzeit University in Ramallah, these governments are funneling more than $13 million (2013-2016) to radical Israeli and Palestinian NGOs.[1]

A majority of the IHL Secretariat funding recipients support BDS and active in anti-Israel demonization. One grantee, Badil, has posted virulently antisemitic imagery on its website. Many other images posted there advocate for the elimination of Israel.[2] Another funding recipient and staunch BDS advocate, Miftah, published an article in March 2013 that repeated the antisemitic blood libel that Jews use Christian blood to bake Passover matzah. After significant public criticism, Miftah removed the article, but attacked the blogger who exposed the article for "smearing" the organization and downplayed the centrality of the blood libel in the article.

Birzeit University, the administrator of the IHL Secretariat funding, is a leading institution in BDS, and according to *Ha'aretz*, has a policy of barring Jews from its campus.[3] A conference sponsored by the Institute of Law, promoted the odious view that Israel, regardless of its borders, is among "racist governments which are absolutely prohibited in their entirety." The conference report emphasizing this discriminatory content was posted prominently on the IHL Secretariat Facebook page. In another instance, the IHL Secretariat's 2014 Annual Report suggests funding given to an Israeli NGO was used to target the United States' Jewish community with anti-Israel political messages.

Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) is another NGO with a troubling record of antisemitism, receiving substantial funding from the EU and European governments. In August 2014, Dr. Swee Ang Chai, founder of the organization, sent an email with the subject line "CNN Goldman Sachs & the Zio Matrix" to the Italian Google group Sempre Contro la Guerra. Ang wrote in her email, "This is shocking video please watch. This is not about Palestine -it is about all of us!" The email also contained, in bold red lettering, "SEE THIS VIDEO BEFORE IT IS REMOVED FROM CIRCULATION -Please do pass on to others who you think would be interested and would pass on>>>The whole world needs to know."

The video made by white supremacist, David Duke, is described as "reveal[ing] how the Zionist Matrix of Power controls Media, Politics and Banking and how each Part of this Tribalist matrix supports and protects each other!" The video labels the Federal Reserve Bank as "the Zio Club FED," calls NBC News anchor Brian Williams a "good Shabbez goy Zioscript reader," identifies U.S. Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan as a "Zio tribalist," and states, "Zios invaded and took over Walt Disney Corp. just as they invaded and took over Palestine."

Despite this shocking and blatant act of anti-Jewish racism, MAP never condemned Chai's antisemitism, took disciplinary action against Chai, nor issued any apology.

In addition to the Chai video, at a December 2013 joint MAP-Lancet Palestinian Health Alliance event held at the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Sir Iain Chalmers made a comment echoing the antisemitism of the Duke video. In an audio recording of the event, Chalmers decries how "Zionists" have "control in so many different domains" and how *The Lancet* medical journal is one publication "they [Zionists] cannot suppress." Chalmers also mused over the "interesting figure" of "six million" in relation to the number of non-Jews "whose lives" the "Jewish state... controls."

In 2008, MAP received the proceeds from an anti-Israel Christmas event organized by a UK-based BDS organization. Lord Carey of Clifton, former Archbishop of Canterbury, spoke out against the campaign, arguing that it demonstrated that "antisemitism and hostility to Jews still lurked beneath the surface in Christian circles in Britain."

MAP's website also includes a page titled "Stage a production of Seven Jewish Children," encouraging the producing of this play. The playwright is Caryl Churchill, a patron of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, one of the key organizers of hateful BDS campaigns in the UK. The page also contains links to a video performance of the play and a downloadable script.

This play has been strongly criticized for its stereotyping of Jews. One critic wrote that this "is not a play about Israel... but it is a play explicitly about Jews.... It is Jewish thought and behaviour that links the play together, not Israel. The words Israel, Israelis, Zionism and Zionist are not mentioned once in the play, while Jews are mentioned in the title and in the text itself." Another critic called the play "a blood libel" saying it was "the mainstreaming of the worst anti-Jewish stereotypes – for instance, that Jews glory in the shedding of non-Jewish blood."

MAP receives significant funding from the EU, UK, Australia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Trocaire, UNICEF, UN Central Emergency Response Fund, The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), and Big Lottery Fund (Britain). None of these funders has taken action to reprimand the NGO for its offensive activities, nor to prevent future incidents.

The egregious examples mentioned above are but a small sample. Despite the extensive evidence of NGO promotion of antisemitism, governments, in particular in Europe, continue to fund these groups with hundreds of millions of dollars, pounds, euros, and kroner, enabling these problematic activities and rhetoric.

Weak justifications by European Union and other officials that NGO projects are unrelated to a grantee's wider agenda and expressions of antisemitism belie government funders' full responsibility for the activities of their grantees. Moreover, there is no doubt that if these groups had engaged in anti-Muslim, anti-black, or LGBT discrimination, they would not receive funding from these governments. Yet, antisemitic activity does not serve as a bar to funding.

The harmful effects of this government support for NGOs are sustained by the secrecy that governs funding processes and shields NGO funding from public scrutiny. This lack of transparency is manifest in government websites and databases that do not provide basic information (i.e. amounts, project descriptions) on NGO grants, the refusal of funding agencies to release documentation on evaluations and decision making, and the refusal of government officials and diplomats responsible for allocating funds to NGOs to respond substantively to inquiries.

The ongoing government funding for NGOs that engage in antisemitic activities and use antisemitic rhetoric highlights the persistent double standard:

Hatred of Jews is tolerated in a way that would be unthinkable for other racial, ethnic, or religious groups.

Likewise, Jewish and Israeli targets are often denied the right to define what constitutes discrimination against them.

European officials will continue to claim they reject antisemitism and its promotion via BDS groups and activists. Yet, until they end the funding that enables these discriminatory campaigns, their words ring hollow.

---

[1] http://www.ngo-monitor.org/article/human_rights_and_international_humanitarian_law_secretariat_denmark_sweden_switzerland_and_the_netherlands0

[2] http://www.ngo-monitor.org/article/badil0

[3] http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/185582/jews-not-allowed-in-palestinian-university